

Pastor Matthew Ude
July 7th, 2019
Independence Day

Matthew 5:11-16 ¹¹ "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. ¹³ "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. ¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. ¹⁶ "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Jesus Is Our Hope

As we look to the future of our nation, state, city or even our church we might be a little worried. What is going to happen? In many respects it doesn't look good.

California recently passed a resolution which condemns any group or persons which teach that there is anything wrong with homosexuality or transgender people. Our society has abandoned any true definition of marriage. Which happened not recently with the approval of gay marriage but 47 years ago with the first "no-fault" divorce laws. Our society and government has sacrificed the lives of innocent babies for the sake of a woman's freedom to live as she wants. We don't seem to be headed in the right direction.

So what hope is there for the future? Vote for trump? Find some other politician and vote for him? Even if Trump fulfills his promise and "makes America great again" his idea of "great" is largely economic and military. Even if Trump or the judges that he appoints can stop the resolution that California just passed, he cannot change the minds and hearts of the Californians or any other American.

By all means vote for Trump or any other candidate whom you think is the best one. I'm not saying Trump is or isn't the right guy for the job. Vote the way you think best. But don't put your trust in any man. Vote as you see fit, but put your trust in the Lord

Psalm 146:3,5 ³ Do not put your trust in princes, *Nor* in a son of man, in whom *there is* no help .
.. ⁵ Happy *is he* who *has* the God of Jacob for his help, Whose hope *is* in the LORD his God,

What hope do we have?

Jesus tells us "You are the salt of the earth."

He says "if the salt loses its flavor it is good for nothing."

Yes, salt cannot lose its ability to be salty. It cannot lose its power. Jesus doesn't say it can. He merely proposes a hypothetical. Suppose it would? then it would be good for nothing. And what Jesus implies here but doesn't say is that, also that which is was supposed to be preserving would be lost. If the salt is gone the meat too will be spoiled and thrown away.

Now there is certainly a warning here. If all the salt is gone, you will be cast out. God's judgment will come.

But there is also a great promise, a reminder of God's patience and mercy. For as long as the salt remains the salt and the nation will be preserved.

Salt preserves things, that is what it does. Just so God makes it clear that for the sake of his elect He will preserve the nation. How much salt does it take to preserve? For the sake of how many righteous will God preserve a nation?

We heard last week how He preserved Israel for the sake of only 7,000. 7,000 out of about 4.1 million. That's about 1 believer for every 600 unbelievers. For the sake of 1 out of every 600 he preserved Israel.

He was willing to preserve Sodom for the sake of even five. Sodom and Gomorrah by the way were a thriving metropolis. Archaeologists have found 1.5 million bodies buried in the area. So five is very small proportion of the population.

Abraham showed great faith, great courage. When he asked the Lord to preserve Sodom he first asked for the sake of 50. But then he kept asking until he got Him all the way down to five. However what if he had asked for more. What if he has asked for the sake of three? Perhaps the Lord would have been merciful, perhaps Sodom and Gomorrah would still be there today. We will never know.

But let us put our hope in the mercy of the Lord. Let us be bold, even bolder than Abraham. Let us ask that Lord preserve our church, our city, our nation, for the sake of even three, or even two.

Let us put out hope in this Lord's mercy for His mercy never fails, it is new every morning.

Thus you see it is salt which preserves. It is for the sake of His elect that the Lord preserves us. Therefore what we need is the preaching of the Gospel.

Voting for good candidates, signing petitions, and showing up for political rallies promoting the life and rights of even the unborn are all good things to do. And perhaps we should do them more often. However a cardboard sign is not going to change the hearts of our opponents. It is the preaching of the Gospel alone which can change the heart and bring about real change, change we can really believe in.

It is the gospel which turns people into believers. Thus Jesus continues in our text, "let your light so shine."

Joining in politics is good and useful and part of our duty as citizens of this country. But ultimately what is going to make a difference is not putting a sign on our yard, "vote for _____" but instead putting a sign on our whole life "vote for Jesus."

How are we to do this?

Salt preserves, it is what it does. A lamp shines, that is what it does. What is the purpose of hiding a lamp? Just as you cannot hide a city so those who live with Christ cannot hide. If you live daily with Christ it will be seen. If you live in His word, your faith will be seen.

A pastor friend of mine told me once that a member of his congregation died and the family told him they did not want him to do the funeral. Because they said, "You will make it all about Jesus and we want it to be all about Jim." What a wonderful thing for someone to say to you. I know you will make it all about Jesus.

They often mean it as an insult, "your one of those Jesus freaks." But it isn't an insult it is the greatest thing one can say about us. "Your all about Jesus."

Consider this, you have a basketball game scheduled Sunday morning during church. Now you might say, "Is it really going to matter if I miss one church service." Well no it might not make that much difference in your life. But imagine instead you skip the game. You go to church. Now your teammates see it and think, "there is a man who puts Jesus first, there is a man who puts his hope in Jesus." What a wonderful way that would be to let your light shine. What a wonderful testimony.

Nevertheless living with Christ, letting your light of faith blaze in your heart and out to the world takes courage. It will not come without cost. Notice what Jesus says, "blessed are you when they revile and persecute you." Persecute means to chase you down for a malicious intent. They will come looking for you.

Doing the right thing takes courage. Letting your light shine takes courage. People are going to see that you are different. You will stand out. Befriending the one kid at school that everyone else ignores takes courage. Walking up to someone you don't know that well and saying hi, takes courage. Inviting your friend to church takes courage. Telling someone abortion is wrong, homosexuality is wrong, takes courage. But above everything else telling them, "You are a sinner but Jesus loves you," takes courage.

We often feel foolish about speaking our faith. We often worry they are going to think we are freak. We keep our mouth shut for the same reason we didn't sit by the unpopular kid in school.

And yet if the salt loses its flavor it is good for nothing. If a lamp does not shine it is good for nothing. This is what and who we are. Let your light shine. Share your hope.

Our hope for our nation and for eternity is found only in Jesus. Our only hope is in Christ, may he preserve us if even only for the sake of two, and may he give to us the courage and strength we need to share that hope with others.

Amen